Deputy Administrator Speeches 2011

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10/28/2011	Los Angeles Metro Discretionary Grant Announcement
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St. Paul Union Depot Groundbreaking

01-18-11

REMARKS FOR
THERESE MCMILLAN
DEPUTY ADMINISTRATOR, FTA
ST. PAUL, MN

Introduction by Jim McDonough – Administrator Rogoff told me we will always lean forward to help make this project work. They've been supportive. Secretary LaHood had an opportunity to come here and he made a commitment that whatever they could do on their end to make this project work – they would be there. And so we're glad to welcome Deputy Administrator Therese McMillan here and thank them for their support (applause).

Thank you, Jim for that very kind introduction.

I really am thrilled to be here today. I had to work my way through airport madness to do it but FAA gets a little bit of a nod for that, I guess. I also want to say that as a native Californian my bragging rights on the cold weather have even a brighter burnish I think so I'm pleased to be able to again be here with you today.

Administrator Peter Rogoff and Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood send their congratulations.

As Jim mentioned, the Secretary personally toured this building in the fall of 2009, and he clearly saw the potential, back then, that has made this day possible.

This is exactly the kind of innovative project that the TIGER grant program was designed to support.

And our $35 million investment in this depot will contribute to the ripple effect that helps local businesses, while giving people a new choice – and maybe a first chance – to really make those connections to get from one place to another without a car.

But this TIGER grant is just one piece of the transportation puzzle.

And I know one of the great challenges here was hobbling together all of the different parts of funding that were required.

Over the last two years, through the Recovery Act and other programs, the Obama Administration has invested nearly $88 million right here in the Twin Cities, to make local transportation better than ever.

We've helped to put more clean-fuel electric and hybrid buses on the street and we've also helped to build long-overdue repairs to aging transit facilities. . .

And we've provided, as was mentioned, millions of dollars for a light rail system that is rapidly transforming Minneapolis-St. Paul into one of our most livable and sustainable metropolitan regions in this country.

And I'm particularly excited looking at the wonderful neighborhood surrounding this depot and I envision that as this project begins to develop the community is going to blossom and bloom even more. And I'm really hoping that I get a chance to come back and continue to see the development that's bound to happen here.

Of course, none of this would be possible without the tremendous partnerships you've built here in Minnesota.

I think you're going to hear that a lot today and in the future because it really is a hallmark of what you've been able to accomplish.

As Secretary LaHood has said time and again, the regions that get their priorities straight, and speak with one voice, stand the best chance of transforming their vision for a modern, connected transportation system and in this time when there's so much we're continuing to do to make this economy advanced. Your work here really is a shining example of what can be accomplished in more difficult times as well as we look forward to a brighter future.

So again many congratulations to you.

I want to thank the local business community which has been a hallmark of this effort, the transportation and labor leaders from all walks in this town and the ordinary citizens. . . who understand that good transportation choices are the lifeblood of the success of this community.

I also want to thank our friends at the Federal Highway Administration and Federal Railroad Administration, who both you know contributed greatly to this effort. It's not often that we get compliments on coordinating among federal agencies and so I'm glad that we can hold this up as an example of what we can also do as well working in partnership with you.

Thank you especially to Congresswoman Mccollum and Senator Klobuchar, who I understand could not be with us today. But their support in supporting the President's Recovery Act and keeping Minnesota's economy moving forward really have been instrumental and we continue to seek their assistance in Washington as we continue our efforts there.

And again it can't be said enough that a special thank-you to the former leader of House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, Jim Oberstar must be extended in all corners. He is here with us in spirit (applause).

There was no greater champion for transportation then and for public transit and again. For more than three decades, he was an inspiring leader who accomplished a tremendous amount for people of Minnesota and the United States. And again we miss him and wish him well.

When the new Congress gets down to business, we'll be working with members of both parties to find a bipartisan path forward.

After all, there is no such thing as a Democratic or Republican infrastructure project and there's no such thing as a Democratic or Republican job.

We all depend on safe infrastructure and job creation has go to be everyone's priorities.

If we set aside our differences, invest wisely, and work together, anything is possible as you have demonstrated here.

And we can invest in job creation, economic opportunity, and competitiveness and give our community a chance to lead their lives and pursue their dreams in every way possible.

Thank you so much for the invitation to come here and best of luck in your efforts going forward.

Thank you

WTS Annual Conference - San Francisco, CA

5/19/2011

REMARKS FOR
THERESE MCMILLAN, FTA
WTS ANNUAL CONFERENCE

"A Federal Transportation Perspective on Winning the Future"

Thank you, Deborah [Dagang.]

I'm thrilled to be here with so many friends and colleagues.

This is a true homecoming for me. My family lives here; I've worked here for many years. And I was the fourth president of the San Francisco chapter of Women in Transportation.

I'm so glad to be here today to congratulate my chapter on reaching its 30th anniversary.

That's an impressive milestone, and it reminds me how long WTS has been a part of my profession and personal life. My career has been enriched and advanced with the support and mentorship of so many WTS members. Just as importantly—especially now that I am in Washington, D.C., my WTS friends here in San Francisco bridge a long, long distance. You keep in touch, and you have cheered my move to work for the Obama Administration. Of all the recognition you have bestowed on me, your continued friendship means the most.

And thank you to those members I have met around the country, who have connected with me immediately—WTS is a large and very strong network!

I strongly encourage all of you to share your wisdom and experience with all the women and men just setting out in our field. Now more than ever, the transportation field needs smart, dedicated people.

And as you'll hear from Transportation Secretary LaHood this evening, the Department of Transportation, and the Obama Administration, are deeply committed to improving education and training opportunities that will help young women, especially, to embark on transportation careers in fields where they have traditionally been under-represented, such as engineers, air traffic controllers, systems analysts, project managers, and so much more.

Federal Multi-Modal Progress, Priorities

Now, let's turn to business, and talk about where we've been, and where we're headed, on transportation policy for our nation.

The title of this year’s WTS conference—Building Bridges—is especially appropriate.

As you know, opinions among Washington lawmakers are deeply divided right now over the best ways to close our deficit, reduce spending, and invest our taxpayer dollars wisely, to help America recover from a deep recession and begin creating jobs and opportunities again.

President Obama understands—as we all do at FTA and the Department of Transportation—that this isn’t an “either/or” proposition.

Our nation cannot continue to grow unless we continue to invest in the infrastructure, the technology, the training, and the people that will move our nation forward.

As the President has said, to win the future, we must out-build, out-innovate, and out-educate our competitors.

And thanks to many of you, that’s just what we’re doing -- making historic investments in high-speed rail, transit, and walkable, bikeable streets so that people can choose to drive less, which is good for their health, their wallets and the environment.

At the same time, we are making our highway network smarter and safer with increased emphasis on State of Good Repair of our roads and bridges; congestion management innovations, and the Secretary’s nationwide assault against distracted driving.

We’re accelerating aviation's transition from the radar-based navigation system of the last century to the satellite-based system of the next century, which will dramatically boost fuel economy by allowing aircraft to fly more directly from origin to destination.

We’re encouraging freight carriers to shift products from less to more fuel efficient systems — from air to trucks, from trucks to rail or from rail to maritime. This is essential to achieving President Obama's goal of doubling the United States' exports between 2009 and 2014 — another major job-creator.

We’re making record-setting investments in capital transit projects – from light rail and commuter rail to bus rapid transit and street cars – bringing more clean, efficient, and safe public transportation choices to Americans everywhere.

And earlier this month, the Obama Administration brought America a step closer to developing a truly 21st-century passenger rail system. The President and Secretary LaHood reallocated $2 billion toward a national high-speed rail network, including $795 million for upgrades to existing passenger rail bridges, tracks, and other equipment.

This is very good news for many areas of the country. We'll boost U.S. manufacturing through a $336.2 million investment in state-of-the-art locomotives and rail cars for California and the Midwest.

And we'll continue laying the groundwork for the nation's first 220-mph high-speed rail system in California through a $300 million investment that extends the current 110-mile segment an additional 20 miles to advance completion of the Central Valley project. This is the backbone of the Los Angeles-to-San Francisco corridor.

Toward Energy-Independence

All across America, such investments are paying off by helping our nation reduce its dependence on oil, create good jobs for a new economy, and connect hard-working families with jobs and other vital services.

Right here in San Francisco, for example, Muni, our transit agency, has set a goal to reduce its fleet of greenhouse gas emissions to 30 percent below 2009 levels by next year – and to become 100 percent emission-free by 2020.

I'm proud to say that FTA is helping Muni – and many other transit agencies – make similar strides with strategic investments in clean, zero-emission, hybrid buses and other fuel-saving technologies that will power the transit vehicles of the future.

A few hundred miles south of here, in Los Angeles, FTA's support for, and investments in, cleaner transit system have already helped the LA County MTA achieve an important milestone -- putting a fleet of buses on the streets that's 100 percent fueled by alternative energy.

These options go a long way to provide relief for millions of Americans struggling to afford gas every week. According to the American Public Transportation Association, riding public transportation saves individuals, on average, $10,116 annually, or $843 a month, compared with driving. This is roughly enough to feed a family of four for a month!

Transportation a Spur to Manufacturing

But our move toward energy independence does something more, too.

It reflects an ambitious strategy to put transportation at the heart of America's effort to revitalize its manufacturing sector.

We'll do that not only by making the components that power our vehicles, but also by making and assembling an entirely new generation of streetcars, rail cars, and buses.

This is the path we must pursue to tap American ingenuity and create good jobs for future generations—including future members of WTS.

Buy America

And it means taking a “Buy America” approach to transportation construction – to ensure that transportation projects are built with American-made products. And to ensure that money flows through the supply chain and generates a powerful ripple effect as workers earn and spend their paychecks. It has been an essential part of our Recovery Act and high speed rail programs because it encourages manufacturers to re-open shuttered American plants and to re-hire skilled American workers.

I want to be sure you all know we launched a new Web site a few months ago that improves access to business opportunities in one central location: “www.dot.gov/buyamerica.”

This site will help any American company easily identify if they can fill a particular need of parties who are seeking waivers to Buy America. It will help any American company learn about each of our agencies’ “Buy America” provisions, requirements, and processes. It will enable any American company to subscribe to e-mail alerts that notify them when new information is posted.

This is a big deal. It builds on a tradition of “Buy America” commitments that reaches back to the time when President Lincoln oversaw construction of the transcontinental railroad.

It points to the kind efficiencies that we’ll develop more of as we flesh out the details of President Obama’s vision for the future of America’s transportation system.

We’ve already seen tremendous progress on this front, as more and more American companies find they can, indeed, source 70 or 80 percent or more of their needs with American-made products, especially iron and steel. Interestingly, many European companies seeking to do business in the U.S. understand this concept – and we encourage them to take advantage of our investments in transportation infrastructure, and our talented workforce, by opening up factories and assembly plants here in the U.S.

Looking Ahead—Budget 2012

We know there’s still much to do to get our economy back on track and put more unemployed Americans back to work.

With that said, this is a very exciting time to work in transportation. President Obama has put our industry at the heart of his plan to create jobs and improve the quality of life for millions of American workers and businesses.

Consider the President’s budget request for 2012: It seeks a total of $22 billion to improve the condition of our transit assets, expand access to transit around the nation, and increase transit safety.

That’s a proposed increase of $10 billion over our fiscal 2010 funding. It’s a tremendous vote of confidence in our mission—and in the work all of you do so well.

This budget requests $10.7 billion to help transit agencies reduce their backlog of aging equipment and vehicles – a major priority for the Department. Of this amount, $7.5 billion is part of a short-term, up-front $50 billion economic boost, which will ensure that state and local partners realize the benefits of these investments in the early years of the next authorization.

Next year’s budget request also seeks funds to support both rural and urban areas with transit capital investments and – importantly – offers targeted, temporary operating assistance for larger urban transit systems in distress. After all, a parking lot full of transit buses doesn’t help anyone if there aren’t enough funds to hire drivers or to fuel the vehicles.

Reauthorization

I know many of you are wondering what’s happening with the next reauthorization for surface transportation programs.

Here’s what I can tell you:

The Administration has shared a set of policy proposals with the appropriate committees in Congress, and a healthy discussion is now under way on how to move forward.

Administrator Peter Rogoff and I are confident that as this process evolves, we’ll have the chance to help make history by boosting our economy, creating jobs, and rebuilding our infrastructure for the 21st century — a win, win, win for all of us.

Obviously, we face challenges on the way to making our vision a reality. But, in the past, transportation policy was one area where members of both parties – Democrats and Republicans -- joined together in the common good.

And let us never forget:

This is America. We don’t do small things. We do big things. We dream big. We build big. And, together, we can and will make this nation’s transportation system the envy of the world once again. Thank you.

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APTA, Memphis, TN

5/22/2011

FTA Administrator Therese McMillan
Remarks at APTA
Memphis, TN

Thank you, Michael Scanlon, for that kind introduction.

I'm thrilled to join all of you at this year's APTA Bus and Paratransit Conference.

FTA Administrator Peter Rogoff and Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood both send their very best wishes for a great conference and another great Roadeo.

Before we begin, I'd like to put in a quick plug for one of the open sessions taking place later this afternoon. My colleague, Anne Ferro, Administrator of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, will host a dialogue on safety and operations issues that affect you directly. This is the first time we've done this with the bus transit community. It's a great opportunity for FTA to listen, and for you to learn more about Motor Carrier's current initiatives and new and existing rulemakings. I hope you'll attend.

Now, I want to begin by thanking Mayor Wharton for hosting us in Memphis this year – a city that has been through a lot, recently.

Everyone in the Obama Administration has watched with great concern as this city, and the Mississippi Delta, struggled in recent weeks to cope with record and near-record levels of flooding. And that's on top of the disastrous and deadly tornadoes that tore through Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky, Mississippi and elsewhere last month.

We are enormously proud and impressed by the courage and compassion that so many of you -- our transit agency partners -- have demonstrated as these disasters unfolded.

The Memphis Area Transit Authority, or MATA, is one of many agencies that took heroic action under dangerous conditions. Your decision to provide emergency transportation to help evacuate families in distress is not only commendable but a real reflection of your deep roots in the communities you serve every day.

And of course, you were not alone.

When tornadoes blasted Alabama, the Northwest Alabama Council of Local Governments sprang into action – deploying transport relief workers to wherever help was needed most; offering free rides on transit vehicles; and,

remarkably, restoring normal service schedules within days of widespread power outages across three counties.

I have no doubt there are many other examples of transit agencies and officials going above and beyond the call of duty to help their communities.

To all of you, we say thank you.

And I'm proud to note that U.S. DOT and FTA staff have been on site, helping citizens and other responders deal with tornado recovery efforts.

As President Obama told flood victims here several days ago, "We're there for you and we're grateful for your resilience."

In light of all that's happened, you'll be pleased to hear that the Administration believes an Emergency Relief Program should be established to provide the funds necessary to quickly restore transit operations in the wake of a disaster. This new program would fund the evacuation costs and temporary operating expenses of transit agencies during and after a disaster.

We think this is an important part of strengthening the safety net for transit agencies.

But let me be clear: This isn't a program that can be stood up today or tomorrow. Rather, it's one of several policy proposals under consideration as part of the broader reauthorization effort now under way in Congress.

I'll say more about the Administration's policy proposals in a few minutes.

First, I want to acknowledge that even those of you who have been spared big natural disasters face serious challenges of another sort – mainly economic.

Under the President's leadership, our economy continues to grow its way out of the worst recession in over half a century.

But many of you still feel pain in the form of local budget cuts, service cutbacks, and delayed maintenance and repairs.

There are, however, a few bright spots.

For example, the President's proposed budget for 2012 puts public transportation at the heart of the Administration's plan to create jobs and improve the quality of life for millions of American workers and businesses.

His proposed budget seeks $22 billion for transit. That's a proposed increase of $10 billion over our fiscal 2010 funding. At a time when budget cutbacks are being proposed across the board, this is a tremendous vote of confidence in our mission—and in the work all of you do so well.

In fact, this is arguably the most significant vote of confidence in public transportation ever made by a U.S. President.

This budget requests $10.7 billion to help transit agencies reduce their backlog of aging equipment and vehicles – a major priority for the Department. Of this amount, $7.5 billion is part of a proposed short-term, up-front $50 billion economic boost, which will ensure that our partners – state DOTs and transit agencies – realize the benefits of these investments in the early years of the next authorization.

While it's much too soon to say what the final 2012 budget will look like, the President's intentions are clear. I encourage all of you to reach out to your Congressional representatives and Senators and let them know how important this level of funding would be in your communities.

Now, before I say more about our priorities for next year's budget and reauthorization, I'd like to share some very good news on the bus front.

In the next three weeks, FTA will issue request for proposals for $1.2 billion in new grants for the current fiscal year. The majority of these funds – over $970 million – is for bus and bus facilities alone.

Also included is roughly $100 million for Clean Fuels projects and another round of competitive TIGGER grants – both of which go a long way to help the transit industry reduce its dependence on oil, lower emissions, and put more clean, energy-efficient vehicles on the street.

Preliminary information on these funds was published in the Federal Register last Friday.

We look forward to working with you to bring these dollars into your communities to expand transit capacity, put new buses on the road, and improve the quality of service available to millions of riders daily.

With gas prices pushing hovering around $4 a gallon in many areas, I'm sure we all agree it's more important than ever to provide affordable, reliable transportation choices in our communities. And in many parts of the country, that commitment begins with bus service.

I'd also like to highlight the growing number of innovative bus rapid transit projects competing for capital funding from FTA.

Our fiscal 2012 recommendations for New Starts and Small Starts capital transit projects include nearly $570 million for 10 new BRT and rail projects. The proposed BRT projects, in particular, have the potential to enhance transit capacity, improve mobility options for millions, and stimulate economic activity in Fresno, California; Fort Collins, Colorado; Jacksonville, Florida, El Paso, Texas; Grand Rapids, Michigan; and King County, Washington.

Bus and BRT service are at the heart of this Administration's livability principles. Lining urban and suburban main streets with express bus stops expands housing choices for people of all incomes. And as we've seen in so

many communities, BRT helps to revitalize downtowns and connect employers with workers.

Later this week, as part of this conference, FTA is holding a Small Starts workshop, where you can learn more about how your community can benefit from BRT investments funded our Small Starts program. I encourage you to attend, if you can.

And very importantly, expanded, reliable and safe bus service of all stripes is a highly effective way to support those who need transit options the most —low income families for whom car ownership is an economic burden; seniors and people with disabilities who'd rather live independently at home than in an institutional setting; young people who need access to school and recreational activities. Livability must be a goal for ALL members of our communities.

BRT service also go hand-in-hand with expanding access to paratransit – a lifeline for so many adults who depend on public transit to participate in the life of their communities.

So I'm pleased to announce today that FTA is releasing more than $1 million in Bus and Bus Facility grant funds to MATA for 10 new paratransit vans to replace aging buses.

For America's wounded veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, for our rapidly growing senior population, for adults battling chronic diseases like diabetes that make it difficult to drive – for all these people and their families, we must ensure that well-coordinated public transportation and mobility options are available.

That's why FTA continues to work through the United We Ride program and the federal Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility to strengthen on-demand transportation and related mobility services.

For example, we're closely watching two pilot programs we helped to fund in Aiken, South Carolina and Paducah, Kentucky, where trained mobility managers are working to make sure people get rides where and when they need them—while also improving the coordination of transportation with other needs, such as workforce training and food pantries.

While we're on the subject, I want to commend APTA's own efforts to promote mobility management, including the development of a mobility management strategic plan and a new APTA Committee on Mobility Management.

Clearly, we're all equally excited about the potential of this approach to strengthen service on so many levels.

In addition to strengthening access and coordination, it's equally important that we support a domestic industry capable of designing, engineering, and

building the buses of the future – buses that are clean, efficient, easy to maintain, and above all, help reduce our dependence on oil.

Too many transit agencies, already strapped for cash, are scrambling to avoid cuts triggered by rapidly rising fuel costs.

We've seen this movie before—most recently in 2008—and we're not eager to watch it again.

It's high time we found a way to break this cycle.

Through our TIGGER program—as part of the Recovery Act—as well as our Clean Fuels program, and other sources, FTA has been making significant, game-changing investments to spur research, development, and testing of fuel-cell buses, hybrid buses, and other alternative power sources.

Earlier this month, President Obama visited the Allison Transmission plant in Indianapolis. This plant builds diesel-electric hybrid transmissions for transit buses. This is the wave of the future – and FTA is committed to partnering with you to help transit agencies make the transition to the next generation of buses made by Allison and other companies.

Here in Memphis, MATA is on the right track, with seven new hybrid-electric buses added recently to its growing fleet of alternatively powered vehicles, funded through the Recovery Act.

The Los Angeles County MTA has done a terrific job too -- putting a fleet of buses on the streets that's 100 percent fueled by alternative energy.

We fully expect to see more and more bus fleets leaving gas pumps behind, installing more hybrid fueling stations, and reaping the long-term benefits of vehicles that get better mileage, have 25 percent longer brake life, and triple the running time between breakdowns.

Now, with all this talk about what's shiny and new, I want you to know that we remain intensely focused on pursuing policies and programs that address some of the core fiscal and operating challenges you're facing right now.

And that brings me back to the Administration's policy proposals to inform Congress' reauthorization effort. Reauthorization is an opportunity to proactively find new ways to do what we do – better and simpler.

Let me highlight some of the proposals that matter most to you.

First, we are reminded every day of the challenges faced by many transit agencies in meeting operating costs during these tough economic times. The Administration supports addressing these operating challenges in new ways. As Secretary LaHood has mentioned several times, there is no point in using federal dollars to buy brand spanking new buses for transit systems if you can't afford to pay the drivers or buy the fuel to put those buses into

service. Our proposal seeks flexibility for our principal Urbanized Area Formula Grant program for this purpose.

This assistance would be targeted and temporary—aimed at economically distressed urbanized areas with 200,000 or more in population, and phased out over three years. Even in a year when the Recovery Act provided an 80 percent boost in federal funding for public transit, we still saw service reductions to the public because of downturns in state and local revenues. We need to get creative to address this issue.

Second, the Administration supports streamlining and consolidating core programs to improve efficiency and become even more responsive to local transportation priorities. This would mean transforming the New Starts and Small Starts programs into more streamlined processes for funding the construction of new fixed-guideway projects and extensions to existing projects, including bus rapid transit and rail. The goal is to create more jobs quickly, complete projects faster, and provide riders real transportation options sooner rather than later.

Additionally, we recognize that many FTA recipients – especially small and rural transit operators – are burdened by the need to administer three separate programs for older adults, people with disabilities, and low-income individuals. So we propose merging three separate programs serving these populations. This would mean one consolidated grant program in place of the free-standing Job Access and Reverse Commute, New Freedom, and programs for elderly and disabled patrons. We think this would be a big step forward in helping you to fill gaps in service in both urban and rural communities, without imposing a huge burden on your time and resources.

Third, we support a groundbreaking commitment to maintain our transit systems in a state of good repair.

The Administration supports a new program that would replace our existing fixed guideway modernization and discretionary bus programs with formula grants that would be provided to transit agencies specifically to improve existing capital assets.

Simply put, this would inject new dollars directly into your systems to restore and replace core assets. We recommend giving priority to transit agencies with the most pressing capital investment needs. And above all, we’re seeking equitable treatment for rail and bus systems.

You’ll have more opportunities to learn about the Administration’s policy proposals in the weeks and months ahead.

Secretary LaHood, and all of us at FTA, are confident that as this process evolves, we’ll have the chance to help make history by boosting our economy, creating jobs, and rebuilding our infrastructure for the 21st century — a win, win, win for all of us.

Clearly, we face challenges on the way to making our vision a reality. But, in the past, transportation policy was one area where members of both parties – Democrats and Republicans – joined together in the common good.

We are hopeful that even in this age of austerity, our nation will continue to make meaningful investments in public transportation to keep us competitive and moving forward.

In closing, I'd like to return to my opening observations:

Here in Memphis and up and down the Mississippi, you faced a mighty, angry river. You met her challenge head on with courage and ingenuity, bonding with your neighbors to do whatever needs to be done, to respond and rebuild.

That's what we do in this country, and it is that spirit that we must harness to reinvest in this nation's transportation system, and make it the envy of the world once again.

Thank you.

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COMTO - Philadelphia, PA

7/19/2011

Thank you, MaryAnn [Collier, board member], for that kind introduction.

And thank you, Julie, for your outstanding leadership.

I'm delighted to be here today. Administrator Peter Rogoff and Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood also send their greetings.

A few months ago, I had the opportunity to meet and talk with COMTO's members in Maryland, and we had a terrific exchange of ideas.

COMTO is a unique organization within the transportation industry, and we at FTA greatly value our long-standing partnership with this group and its members.

Your leadership in bringing greater access, mobility, and opportunity to communities around the country is as important today as it was 40 years ago, when COMTO sponsored its first annual conference.

I'd like to begin by focusing for a moment on the economy, because this is so central to the work that we do.

President Obama and the Administration are determined to find new ways to keep our economy growing as we slowly emerge from a deep recession that has undoubtedly affected many of you, your co-workers, your agencies, and perhaps even your families.

We have had some successes:

In June, the private sector added 57,000 jobs. And in the last sixteen months, we've added over 2.2 million private sector jobs.
We're making progress, but we still have a long way to go and we know there are going to be bumps in the road. The President understands that the unemployment rate remains unacceptably high and faster growth is needed to replace the jobs lost in the downturn.

We will not be satisfied until every American who wants work can find a job. That's why this Administration is working with Congress to pass a bipartisan infrastructure bill that will help us tackle our transportation challenges—not only to expand public transit where it's needed most, but also to bring our oldest transit systems into a state of good repair.

Now, as we work toward these goals, we absolutely must level the playing field for small and disadvantaged businesses in transportation, construction, and related fields.

This is a very high priority for us at FTA and DOT-wide.

That's why, last month, we launched an innovative workforce development initiative to target pilot programs around the country that train, hire, develop, and retain transit workers. We must make a concerted effort to build a knowledgeable workforce that will ensure that our systems are safe, reliable, and desirable long into the future.

FTA has invested $3 million in this initiative.

These funds will go to

- programs in New Orleans and Denver that train new entrants to the workforce for jobs in the transit industry;
- vocational programs in Massachusetts and New Jersey that prepare high school and college students for careers in transit;
- leadership training programs in California, New York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio transit agencies;
- and a distance learning center in South Dakota targeted at rural transit agencies.

From these programs, we hope to learn valuable lessons—including best practices that can be replicated in other parts of the country.

Along with preparing tomorrow's workforce, we must also fire up America's small and disadvantaged businesses today. We want to be sure that qualified businesses gain greater access to federally funded highway, transit, and airport projects.

This should be a natural part of how we do business.

That's why, earlier this year, a new rule went into effect to improve our Department's DBE program for disadvantaged and minority-owned businesses in four key ways:

- ONE. We're making it easier to do business in multiple states. To reduce the burdens on firms seeking DBE certification in more than one state, the new rules require states to accept certifications from other states, unless there is good cause not to.
- TWO. We're increasing the personal net worth cap. This is the first adjustment to the personal net worth cap since it was first set in 1989. The adjustment, from $750,000 to $1.3 million, applies to highway, transit, and aviation parts of our DBE program.
- THREE. We're increasing accountability. State and local transportation agencies must include DBEs in their spending plans. If they fail to meet established goals, they'll have to evaluate why and create a plan to get them back on track.

Our Inspector General and others are appropriately investigating a number of cases that raise serious questions about this process.

The point is, you can have all the rules and regs and guidance you want on the street – but if some disadvantaged businesses are just serving as a pass-through, or acting in name only, then you haven't achieved your goals for more equitable participation.

- And FOUR, we're generating greater small business participation. This means new tools to foster small business participation -- such as unbundling large contracts and establishing race-neutral small business set-asides.

To America's small and disadvantaged business owners, these changes should make a world of difference.

Making sure the contracting process is open to everyone--big and small--helps ensure that America gets the best possible bang for our buck as we complete important infrastructure projects.

That's why, in addition to the improvements I just mentioned, we're also expanding our bonding education program.

We're confident this is an effective way to help more small businesses become bond-ready so they can better compete for transportation contracts.

If you're a small business owner, please consider signing up for one of the bonding workshops we're running throughout the country this year.

Looking ahead. . .

I think we can all agree that this has been a year like no other when it comes to the intensity and importance of the debate over investments in public transportation.

The stakes truly have never been higher.

The President understands the need to rein in spending. But at the same time, he also knows we must continue to invest in our future.

He knows it's important to put more money behind our priorities.

That's why, in the fiscal 2012 budget, the President supports our call to increase funding for public transportation from $10.7 billion in 2010 to $22.4 billion in 2012.

This includes a proposed increase in formula assistance to all the nation's transit agencies by about 43% in a single year.
It would allow our Capital Transit program would grow by 75% in a single year.

And it triples our investment in the transit industry's state of good repair needs.

Our proposed budget also lets us hit the ground running for a new reauthorization of surface transportation programs – which, as you know, Congress is working on right now.

We at DOT are determined to work with Congress to get a good bill as soon as possible, and we're working to ensure there's money to back up the President's bold vision for the future.

We're hopeful that when the dust finally settles, our top priorities will be addressed.

Reauthorization is an opportunity to proactively find new ways to do what we do – better and simpler.

For example, we're reminded every day of the challenges transit agencies face in meeting operating costs. There's no point in using federal dollars to buy brand new buses if you can't afford to pay the drivers or put fuel in the tanks.

That's why we support a brand new effort to provide targeted and temporary assistance to transit providers in economically distressed urbanized areas. We're well aware that even in a year when the Recovery Act provided an 80 percent boost in federal funding for public transit, we still saw service reductions because of the downturn in state and local revenues.

We also support streamlining and consolidating core programs to improve efficiency and become even more responsive to local transportation priorities. This would mean transforming FTA's capital New Starts and Small Starts programs into more streamlined programs for funding the construction of new and growing rail and bus projects. The goal is to create more jobs quickly, complete projects faster, and provide riders real transportation options sooner rather than later.

We also recognize that many FTA recipients, especially small and rural transit operators, are burdened by the need to administer three separate programs for older adults, people with disabilities, and low-income individuals.

So we propose merging three separate programs serving these populations. This would mean one consolidated grant program in place of the free-standing Job Access and Reverse Commute and New Freedom programs, among others.

We think this would be a big step forward in helping you to fill gaps in service in both urban and rural communities—without impose a huge burden on your time and resources.

One other priority I'll mention: We support a groundbreaking commitment to bring our transit systems into a state of good repair.
In short, we're hoping to inject new dollars directly into the nation's transit systems to restore and replace core assets. We recommend giving priority to transit agencies with the most pressing capital investment needs—treating bus and rail equally.

All of these priorities I've mentioned speak to our commitment to equity. . .

- for riders, who depend on transit to get to work, to daycare, and to medical appointments. . .
- for small businesses and entrepreneurs working hard to succeed in the transportation industry and create jobs for those just coming up. . .
- and for our communities, where access to good transportation helps to stabilize neighborhoods, revitalize downtown centers, and attract employers and families.

Obviously, we face some hurdles on the way to making our vision a reality. But, in the past, transportation policy was one area where members of both parties—Democrats and Republicans—joined together in the common good.

We remain optimistic that we can work together in the weeks and months ahead.

I strongly encourage all of you to work with your delegation to fight for our priorities, for a meaningful budget, and for a forward-looking reauthorization bill.

As you well know, this mission couldn't be more important.

And let us never forget:

This is America. We reach high. We push the envelope. But we must always reach back and grab the hands of all members of our society, so they can successfully climb the ladder of progress, too.

Your 40th anniversary reminds us how important that task remains.

Thank you and congratulations on your accomplishments, today and going forward.

Thank you.

###

3rd Annual State of Good Repair Roundtable - Atlanta, GA

7/20/2011

Deputy Administrator McMillan's Remarks "As Prepared for Delivery"

Welcome, everyone.

Thank you for taking time to join us this week.

I want to thank FTA's engineering office for arranging our third SGR roundtable.

I hope we all use this opportunity to sharpen our understanding of the SGR challenges facing our industry, and come away with an enhanced skill set to address the issues head-on.

I think our tour of MARTA's SGR hot-spots this afternoon will help set the stage for the presentations to follow.

And I think the presentations we'll hear from four of the six agencies selected to participate in FTA's pilot transit asset management program will be especially informative. You'll have a chance to learn how these peer agencies are planning to tackle an array of information, project, cost, and forecasting challenges related to asset management.

I can't emphasize enough the extent to which this entire issue – state of good repair and transit asset management – has taken center stage at FTA. Last week, Peter Rogoff participated in a high-profile tour of the SEPTA system in Philadelphia along with Senator Bob Casey and other dignitaries. The event was widely covered in the mainstream press—which rightfully called attention to the serious infrastructure needs of SEPTA and other transit systems. I want to share with you a striking fact that Peter shared during that tour:

The loss of even 2% or 3% of passengers on big Northeastern transit systems in regions like Philadelphia and New York—and we might add Atlanta—would more than offset the gains in transit ridership on new systems in the entire western half of the U.S.

I think that's a bold and stark reflection of the situation we're in, with respect to striking the right balance between the infrastructure we already have, and the infrastructure we want to build.

No wonder, then, that one of FTA's core principles, for SGR, is to rebalance our priorities between preservation and expansion to ensure we pursue a sustainable investment strategy.

Two other core principles I'll mention:

- First, using research and pilot programs to better understand how asset management is done today, and document best practices for improvement. We're still in the information-gathering phase on this and expect to learn a great deal to help us set the right course.
- And second, keeping the lines of communication open between FTA and transit agencies. We appreciate the tremendous response we've had from industry engineers and capital asset managers. Your ongoing participation is vitally important as we share results and help to implement solutions.

Going forward, we have new challenges to address, including:

- First, we must communicate clearly and effectively with our stakeholders through timely analysis and cost-effective data collection. With that in mind, FTA will shortly release a report to Congress on our SGR initiative.
- Second, altering our mindset so that we learn to emphasize effective reinvestment strategies for our existing infrastructure—rather than focusing so much of our planning efforts on new capacity.
- Third, developing standard measures for benchmarking SGR.
- And fourth, working through our annual budgeting process to establish an SGR formula grant program that will enable us to lay the groundwork for data collection, asset management plan requirements, and oversight procedures. The President's 2012 budget request takes an initial run at this —but we're not yet certain of the outcome.

President Obama fully supports our efforts to bring more and better transportation choices to our communities.

He understands, as do all of us at FTA and DOT, that some tough choices lie ahead.

I'm grateful to all of you for working with us, and for being our partners, as we find creative, innovative ways to invest our limited federal transportation dollars wisely and well.

Thank you.

###

APTA Sustainability Conference - Los Angeles, CA

8/1/2011

Remarks as Prepared for Delivery

REMARKS FOR
THERESE MCMILLAN, FTA
APTA SUSTAINABILITY CONFERENCE
LOS ANGELES, CA
AUGUST 1, 2011

Thank you, Bill [Millar].

I'm thrilled to join you today to talk about our shared commitment to sustainability.

Together, we are determined to become better stewards of our environment.

We are determined to bring a "green" mindset to the work of strengthening our transportation systems, our communities, and our economy.

It is abundantly clear to all of us that the path we've been on for decades. . . consuming vast quantities of fossil fuels, encouraging policies that promote sprawl, tolerating levels of roadway congestion that unleash harmful greenhouse gases. . . is unsustainable economically, socially, and politically.

It isn't difficult to agree that we must change course.

But getting there is another matter entirely.

The kind of change we're talking about requires transformational shifts in the way the federal government, and its partners, choose to fund core transportation, housing, and environmental programs.

It requires a big change in the kinds of incentives we offer to grantees.

It requires a whole new level of technical assistance and capacity building to ensure that local and regional governments can actually incorporate sustainable practices into their long-range plans for development.

While the idea of "sustainability" isn't exactly new, the extent to which we are embracing it—making it part of the fabric of government at every level—signals a clear break from the past.

We are, indeed, entering new territory.

And as the old saying goes, the devil is in the details.

I'd like to spend the next few minutes highlighting some of the early successes we've had on the sustainability front. . . share some lessons learned. . . and outline where we think there is still work to be done.

Let's begin with some clear signs of progress.

The Obama Administration has arguably done more in the past two years to encourage the implementation of effective sustainability programs than any Administration in history.

I'm proud to say the Department of Transportation, and the Federal Transit Administration, have had a great deal to do with that.

DOT's sustainability partnership with HUD and the EPA has so far awarded more than $1 billion in technical assistance, planning, and capital grants that are bringing vacant brownfields back to life; putting more local buses and streetcars on city streets; and including bikers and walkers in any comprehensive planning process.

In June, DOT announced the availability of up to $175 million in new livability grants through the partnership. These funds are aimed at assuring that transportation and housing decisions are made jointly, while recognizing the unique character of each community.

FTA also recently announced a third round of TIGGER grants—an innovative program promoting transit investments in greenhouse gas and energy reduction.

These funds, combined with additional funds from FTA's Clean Fuels Program, allow transit providers to compete for a share of about $100 million for innovative projects that create green jobs, promote the use of clean fuels, and cut our nation's dependence on oil.

This means that FTA has made roughly $276 million available for innovative transit energy projects since 2009. And these investments are already paying off.

The Cleveland Regional Transit Authority, for example, is using TIGGER funds to make seemingly mundane improvements to lighting, insulation, and other areas to reduce energy consumption by more than 30 percent a year. That's over half a million dollars in annual energy savings, and a payback on our investment in under five years.

In Indiana, the Greater Lafayette Public Transportation Corporation is using TIGGER money to erect three wind turbines. This provides a renewable energy sources to power the agency's main facilities in Lafayette and cover about 70 percent of its total energy needs. Better still, the agency expects to sell excess power back to the utility.

And in Atlanta, MARTA recently broke ground on a large solar canopy installation that will simultaneously harness solar power to operate a major

bus facility, while providing much-needed shade for parked buses. The solar panels alone will offset roughly half the facility's annual electrical costs.

What have we learned from all the great work that's under way and on the drawing boards?

We've learned that projects like these, and scores of others, provide a clear window onto what we can achieve by leveraging sustainable practices that are not only good for the environment, but for the transit industry's bottom line at a time when every single penny counts.

And, importantly, we've learned that sustainability goals cannot be achieved in a vacuum.

This is all about partnerships—between federal departments, between local and regional governments, between state transportation planners and MPOs, and between public agencies and private industry.

Nor can we succeed with a strictly top-down approach.

We've learned, working with our counterparts in HUD and the EPA, that coordination is critical. If we in the federal government cannot align our priorities, our incentives, and our funding streams, how can we expect our local partners to do so on their end?

At the same time, Washington can provide tools, training, and funding—but it's up to all of you to help win the political and popular support back home that enables communities to get on the same page, set priorities, and compete for federal resources that help state and local dollars go a lot further.

So now I've highlighted some early "wins," and lessons we're learning from new ways of doing business.

There's still a lot we all need to figure out, when it comes to making sustainability truly successful across the board.

There are still many distinct filters that drive decisions and priorities. How do we avoid creating new silos that undercut the holistic approach we're aiming for?

For instance, FTA's commitment to help transit agencies better manage their system-wide maintenance backlogs and improve asset management practices can be described as a sustainability initiative.

Likewise, our commitment to invest in multi-modal transportation projects that promote healthy, vibrant neighborhoods can also be construed as a sustainability initiative.

Both are valid—but they call for different metrics, different resources, different solutions.

And then there is climate change—potentially the biggest driver of sustainability activities in the future.

I will be the first to admit that this is an area where, from a policy and program perspective, we're still in a fluid state. We're still figuring things out.

We know that adapting to climate change has serious implications for the transit industry, which must grapple with the impact of temperature extremes on infrastructure wear-and-tear, while dealing with an increase in catastrophic events like floods and tornadoes.

The open question is determining the best approaches to tackle this on multiple fronts—federally and at the state and local levels, and in partnership with private industry and the research community.

One promising model to watch closely is under way right here in California. The stated passed the Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act in 2008, known as SB 375. In a nutshell, it's a legislative mandate that requires MPOs to develop sustainable community strategies—such as transit-oriented development—in order to meet greenhouse gas reduction targets.

This is a promising starting point that opens the door for federal incentives to reinforce state-level requirements. It potentially sets us on a path to integrate land use, housing, and transportation planning so we can meet our sustainability goals.

But of course, this is just the beginning of an extensive process.

We're eager to engage all of you in a discussion about how we anticipate and address climate-change issues in transportation.

That's why I strongly encourage you to attend our first workshop on the impact of climate change on transit, held here in Los Angeles on Wednesday, with additional sessions to follow in the fall in Chicago and Washington, D.C.

Looking ahead, we all recognize that we're living in an age of austerity. We're all being asked to do more, with less.

This lends added urgency to our sustainability initiatives, because as we all know, lessening our dependence on oil, improving efficiency, and supporting a green economy all help tight budgets stretch farther than they otherwise could.

Even as we tighten our belts, this Administration is committed to finding the resources we need to move our priorities forward and secure better transportation for all Americans.

Obviously, we face some hurdles on the way to making our vision a reality. But we remain optimistic that we can work productively with Congress in the weeks and months ahead.

Meanwhile, I strongly encourage all of you to work with your delegation to fight for our shared priorities, for a meaningful budget, and for a forward-looking reauthorization bill.

As you well know, this mission couldn’t be more important.

And let us never forget: This is America. We reach high. We push the envelope. And together, we’ll continue to build the transportation systems that will keep this country moving forward.

Thank you.

###

FTA Climate Change Adaptation Seminar - Los Angeles, CA

8/3/2011

Remarks as Prepared for Delivery

THERESE MCMILLAN, FTA DEPUTY ADMINISTRATOR
FTA CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION SEMINAR
LOS ANGELES, CA

Thank you for joining us today to launch the first of three timely and important conversations about the impact of climate change on transit.

Please be aware that FTA will sponsor additional sessions, which will be announced on our website.

I want to thank APTA and the LA County MTA for collaborating with us and helping us pull off this morning's seminar. I also want to thank our speakers, who have traveled near and far to be here with us.

I think you'll find we have a good program in store for you today, with presentations from scientists and practitioners as well as an interactive exercise and time for discussion.

As you know, achieving a state-of-good-repair and maintaining high safety standards in the transit industry are top FTA goals. And these goals are threatened by climate change. Flooding and heat waves stress materials and degrade assets.

And in a vicious cycle, transit facilities that are not in a state of good repair become even more vulnerable to failure during extreme weather. High heat can cause track buckling with the potential for derailments, threatening safety.

Increased flooding and more intense storms also threaten safety, as do the impacts of heat waves on customer and worker health.

Such events are enormously disruptive. For instance, flood waters in Nashville last year inundated transit maintenance facilities and buses in five feet of water, causing major damage and forcing service suspension for four days.

We can and must confront these challenges head-on, today.

The fact is, climate change is not just an issue for future generations. It is happening here and now, as the very best science coming out of NOAA, NASA, the National Academy of Sciences, and other expert bodies can attest.

Both science and common sense tell us we need to reduce greenhouse gas levels to lessen future climate impacts, while at the same time adapting to the climate impacts already being felt, as a result of past emissions.

Since the transit industry has been working on the mitigation side of the problem for some time, this workshop focuses primarily on the relatively newer issue of adaptation.

Responsible risk management calls for adapting to reasonably foreseeable changes in climate conditions.

While this is a new area for the industry, transit agencies can build on the experience they already have dealing with a range of climate and weather challenges.

Those of you directly affected by the tremendously powerful tornadoes and floods that hit the Midwest, New England, the Mississippi Valley, and elsewhere over the past year can surely boast that you have plenty of experience already.

But there's still plenty of opportunity to integrate adaptation strategies into asset management programs, the transportation planning process, and emergency preparedness plans.

FTA has recently issued policy communications clarifying our commitment to integrate climate change impacts and adaptation into our planning, operations, policies, and programs.

This is an important step forward for us—one that brings us closer to working with our partners to achieve meaning solutions.

Let me briefly highlight other actions FTA is taking to address climate change, in addition to this series of workshops.

First, I'm pleased to announce we're releasing today a new report on public transportation and climate change adaptation. You'll hear more about this later.

Second, we recently announced the availability of $525,000 for pilot projects that model different climate adaptation assessments at transit agencies. Applications are due August 25th. And again, more information is available if you don't already have it.

Thank you again for participating in this workshop.

My staff and I look forward to working with you find new ways to meet our climate change challenges—and reduce adverse impacts on our systems, our workers, and our riders as much as possible.

Thank you.

###

State Partnerships Meeting - Washington, DC

8/11/2011

"Remarks as Prepared for Delivery"

THERESE MCMILLAN, FTA DEPUTY ADMINISTRATOR
STATE PARTNERSHIPS MEETING
WASHINGTON, DC

I'm pleased and honored to be here with so many friends of FTA and champions for public transportation in the United States.

As Peter Rogoff conveyed in his remarks yesterday, at a time when the conversation in Washington is all about budget cuts, President Obama and Secretary LaHood remain committed to making smart investments in transportation.

And so do all of us at FTA.

We're committed to getting a transportation bill passed soon that will put more Americans back to work rebuilding our rail and bus systems, bridges, roads, and other critical infrastructure – and bring a measure of stability to the planning process.

Of course, there's no getting around the fact that times are tough for all of us.

But challenge also means opportunity. You've heard this before—but there's truth in it.

I think FTA's policies and programs are very much in tune with an era where we all must learn to do more with less.

That's why we are advocating so strongly for better transit asset management practices that put transit system maintenance and preservation on a more predictable path.

It's why we are advocating for sustainable technologies that help reduce energy consumption and fuel bills, at a time when transit agency budgets are tighter than ever.

It's why we support a brand new initiative to help local transportation providers work together more efficiently than ever, by using innovative one-call and one-click transportation resource centers to help military families, veterans, and people with disabilities connect with jobs and other resources.

Now, I'm here today to talk about livability, not veterans or transit asset management strategies.

But all of these priorities are related.

Livability is all about investing the resources we have right now in local projects and priorities that improve the quality of life for everyone—working families, businesses, the elderly, and people with disabilities.

Livability comprises a vision of safer, healthier, and more prosperous neighborhoods—with green space, walking, and cycling paths nearby.

It's a vision of communities that are economically competitive and affordable—communities in which people have more than one choice about how to get to work.

It's also a vision of infrastructure—whether road, rail, sea, or air—that's safe, functional, and in a state of good repair.

And finally, it's a vision of an America in which economic development, housing, and transportation planning are connected, as our nation finally pushes back against decades of disinvestment in metropolitan regions, and rural towns, and the infrastructure that sustains them.

Here in the U.S., we've tried for years, with the very best intentions, to make some of this vision a reality. Sometimes we call it "smart growth." Sometimes we call it "urban revitalization" or "rural reinvestment."

But whatever we call it, it's not easy to achieve because the projects we're talking about, on the scale we're talking about, require significant investment and the vision to plan not for the next quarter or the next election cycle, but for the next generation.

Through the TIGER grant program—that's Transportation Investments Generating Economic Recovery—we funded $1.5 billion of merit-based livability projects across America.

Many of them provided Americans with more affordable, more efficient, more sustainable ways of getting around—by encouraging sidewalks and bike paths, and transit solutions like commuter and light rail.

Last fall, we took another significant step forward.

Building on our momentum, we announced nearly $600 million in competitive TIGER II grants.

This second round of funding was different from the first because we specifically aimed to help communities develop a vision for livability by awarding planning grants.

This approach is especially important to small towns and rural areas that may have big-city-type problems, but not big-city staff or the capacity to address them.

And the proof is in the pudding:

In roughly a dozen rural communities. . . including Western Colorado, the Northeast corner of Georgia, Central Missouri, and upstate New York. . . FTA has awarded millions of dollars in planning grants to help rural communities explore new transportation choices, connect small villages, make streetscape improvements, and identify barriers that hold residents back from reaching desired destinations.

And stay tuned for TIGER III:

An interim notice of funding availability was published July 1 – and the full notice is due out any day now.

This time around, there's $527 million available for innovative transportation projects – nothing to sneer at in this day and age.

And while there's no money set aside specifically for capital planning grants, as in TIGER II, rural applicants are strongly encouraged to apply.

In fact, a fourth of these funds are set aside for rural projects.

Smaller projects count here – you can request as little as $1 million for a priority project in your area.

Complementing our strong TIGER program, DOT is now in the second year of a successful Sustainability Partnership with HUD and the EPA.

Together, we're evaluating and awarding grants for projects where transit, housing, and environmental concerns—such as vehicle emissions—are considered together, to ensure better outcomes.

As part of this Sustainability Partnership, DOT alone has provided nearly $100 million in grants to 33 communities and 62 local and regional partnerships to create a new generation of policies and projects that bring affordable housing closer to jobs and businesses.

And again, small towns and rural areas are a central focus.

In Mid-coast Maine, for example, DOT has invested $1.6 million in consultation with HUD and the EPA to help state transportation officials do a better job of linking land use with transportation needs.

This project, by the way, was thought up by Maine residents. It's very much a bottom-up initiative, rather than top-down.

This partnership is a big deal.

It represents an unprecedented new way of working together.

And it sets a powerful example for how we can reward true excellence… build effective partnerships…and ensure good stewardship of taxpayer dollars in communities of all sizes.

In an era of austerity, cooperation along these lines is more essential than ever, if we hope to achieve our goals.

To fully realize our vision for livable communities, we will continue to seek out merit-based projects in which to invest our limited resources. And we will work with our friends in Congress to set up a National Infrastructure Bank, as President Obama has discussed.

This is an essential tool for leveraging private investment dollars to finance transportation innovations that are regional or national in scope—and which deserve consideration on the merits.

And to help build and rebuild economies outside major metropolitan areas, FTA is working internally and with Federal partners to improve our ties to rural communities and foster the kind of technical assistance and capacity building that small and rural communities need to translate big dreams into local success stories.

For example, DOT and its sustainability partners will soon release a join report on Building Federal Support for Sustainable Rural Communities.

The report will clarify the programs within each Federal agency that serves rural communities—cutting through some of the red tape for you.

And we'll provide case studies of how Federal support works in rural communities, which can serve as models.

In addition, FTA has developed a "Guide to Effective Participation in Statewide Decision-Making for Transit Agencies in Non-Urbanized Areas."

That's a mouthful, to be sure.

But the point of this report, which we'll release later in August, is to provide examples that help rural transit agencies and rural planning agencies work more effectively with state DOTs to incorporate transit in statewide decision-making.

The report is chock full of case studies and examples showing how transit contributes to livability in rural areas.

Our bottom line is this: The investments we've made in transportation and infrastructure over the last two years are already creating jobs, opportunities, and better neighborhoods for millions of Americans.

But we can't stop there.

President Obama knows, and we know, that this is a time to move forward, not backward.

This is a time to invest wisely in our communities, so that our children and their children can live in more affordable homes, have more and better access to transportation, and enjoy a cleaner environment.

Looking ahead, we recognize that there are many different opinions in Washington on the right way to move our country forward to ensure a brighter future for everyone.

For our part, we'll continue to fight for the transit services that Americans need and want.

And so will the President.

In the end, access to safe, reliable transportation isn't a Democrat priority or a Republican priority.

It's about working together to find the best solutions to keep American moving forward and help working families around the country access the jobs and services they need to succeed.

We need all of you to join with us in advocating for taxpayer investments in local transportation projects that make a difference in your communities.

We need you to remind your Congressional representatives that Americans want more transit, not less. They want communities filled with affordable housing, reasonable commutes, and access to vibrant downtowns.

I'm grateful to all of you for all your hard work and determination.

FTA is very proud to be your partner.

Thank you.

###

The Tide Ribbon Cutting Ceremony - Norfolk, VA

8/18/2011

"Remarks as Prepared for Delivery"

REMARKS FOR
THERESE MCMILLAN, FTA
THE TIDE RIBBON CUTTING CEREMONY
NORFOLK, VA

On behalf of Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood and FTA Administrator Peter Rogoff, I'm thrilled to join you today to celebrate the inauguration of Virginia's first light rail system.

I want to thank Congressman SCOTT for supporting FTA's investments in good transportation choices for the region.

I also want to thank Mayor FRAIM, THELMA DRAKE with the Virginia DOT and local council members for contributing to the success of this project.

As the residents of Norfolk and the Hampton Roads region will soon discover, when light rail comes to town, wonderful things happen:

- Property values rise.
- New housing, retail, and business opportunities spring up in neighborhoods served by new transit routes.
- Traffic congestion declines.

And household transportation costs go down, as transit riders are able to spend far less at the gas pump.

Beginning officially, on Monday, many of you will begin to experience these benefits first-hand.

As workers head out to Norfolk Southern and other jobs downtown, as students attending Old Dominion or Norfolk State University head to campus, as people head out to the Eastern Virginia Medical Complex, and as seniors and people with disabilities head out for the day, they can all count on a reliable, affordable alternative to driving, thanks to the seamless connections between light rail and bus service.

The Tide is truly a win-win for Norfolk and the region.

FTA is proud to be your partner in this project.

Together, FTA and DOT contributed roughly 60 percent the total cost, including a $10 million boost from the Recovery Act, which helped this project reach the finish line.

This funding commitment is the reason we're standing here today.

The Tide Light Rail system is a great example of what we can achieve when the federal government and local communities work together on a vision for a sustainable future.

It’s a great example of how our government returns taxpayer dollars back to the community – to invest in projects reflecting your local priorities, needs, and interests.

I congratulate all of you on taking the first step to enhance transportation choices for this vibrant and growing region.

We at FTA look forward to working with you in the future, as you create a vision for regional public transportation that will further improve the quality of life for Norfolk and all of Hampton Roads.

Thank you.

I’m really looking forward to a chance to Ride the Tide!

###

WTS Rhode Island Chapter

9/28/2011

REMARKS FOR
THERESE MCMILLAN, FTA
WTS—RHODE ISLAND CHAPTER

I'm thrilled to be here with you today.

Wherever I go, WTS is my home away from home.

So it's great to be here to celebrate the Rhode Island chapter's fifth birthday.

Congratulations!

I am so proud of all of you for your hard work, your expertise, and your leadership in transportation.

Many of you are the "job creators" we hear so much about these days.

You're on the front lines of our industry, planning, designing, building, and managing the transportation systems this country needs to continue growing, competing, and improving our quality of life—including right here in Rhode Island.

My message to all of you today is that President Obama gets it. Secretary LaHood gets it. And all of us at FTA certainly get it.

Investing in this country's transportation infrastructure is absolutely vital to strengthening our economy and our communities.

As you know, the President and Secretary LaHood have been traveling around the country, standing up for the American Jobs Act.

I know you've heard a lot about it already, but let me share some details that may be new to you.

The goal here, as you know, is to pass this legislation as soon as possible so we can immediately put workers back on the job and put more money in the pockets of working Americans, as we rebuild our roads, bridges, airports, schools, and of course, transit systems.

There are three main components:

- First, a $50 billion immediate investment in transportation-related construction jobs.
- Second, a National Infrastructure Bank, with $10 billion in upfront loan funding for a wide range of critical projects in transportation, water, and energy.

- And third, the package directs federal departments and agencies to identify high impact, job-creating infrastructure projects so we can fast-track them through the review and permitting process.

  We know there are good projects all across this country just waiting to get started.

  And we know there are millions of unemployed construction workers looking for jobs.

  That's why the American Jobs Act assigns more funding to DOT—$50 billion—than any other federal department.

  A significant slice of that will help to buy new buses and rolling stock, and much-needed repairs for existing rail and bus systems, in urban, suburban, and rural areas around the country.

  There's also $5 billion for jobs on projects selected through a scaled-up TIGER program.

  One other bit of welcome news: Up to 10 percent of the transit funds in this package could be used for operating assistance, which our recipients need in these tough times.

  Now, what does all this have to do with all of you in Rhode Island? Plenty.

  Under the American Jobs Act, transit providers in the Providence area would be eligible for more than $6.2 million to improve the state-of-good-repair for buses and bus facilities.

  Another $1.4 million would be available to improve and modernize the region's fixed-guideway systems.

  And more than $208 million would be available in combined formula funds from FTA for Providence plus all the small and rural communities throughout Rhode Island.

  Clearly, these funding streams would go a long way to help Rhode Island DOT—RIDOT—continue its work to extend commuter rail along the Northeast Corridor from Providence to Wickford Junction.

  It would support RIDOT's ongoing commitment to maintain and improve existing highway and rail infrastructure projects.

  And it would boost RIPTA's ability to pursue good transit projects like the proposed urban circulator in central Providence.

  The President is asking Congress to pass this legislation right away, and with good reason: It's going to create the jobs that people need right now, while building the infrastructure this country needs need for years to come.

  Now, the fact is, we can't make the American Jobs Act the law of the land without you.

In community after community, transformations are underway because of your tireless efforts – whether making your neighborhoods more livable… or your transit systems more accessible.

We need you to bring that same commitment to this critical push for the American Jobs Act. We need you not just to join the cause, but to lead it.

If we come together – if we fight to break through the do-nothing status-quo – we can give the American people the transportation choices they demand and deserve.

Now is the time to act.

Thank you.

###

Maine Tri-State Conference

9/29/2011

REMARKS FOR
THERESE MCMILLAN, FTA
MAINE TRI-STATE CONFERENCE
PORTLAND, ME

I'm thrilled to be here with you today. And I'm delighted to be back in New England.

On behalf of Secretary LaHood and Peter Rogoff, I want to thank all of you for your hard work, your expertise, and your leadership in transportation.

We recognize that the last several months have been enormously challenging for you.

You're wrestling not only with tight budgets, but with Mother Nature, as well.

Hurricane Irene clearly hit much of New England hard in August.

That's why Secretary LaHood rushed to release millions of dollars in emergency funds to help repair roads, bridges, and other transportation necessities, especially in Vermont, where the damage was greatest.

I hope your states will be made whole again, as quickly as possible.

In light of all that's happened, you'll be pleased to hear that the Obama Administration supports the creation of an Emergency Relief Program with sufficient funds to quickly restore transit operations in the wake of a disaster.

This new program would fund the evacuation costs and temporary operating expenses of transit agencies during and after a disaster. We hope that when Congress finally passes a new surface reauthorization bill, this provision will be included. It's a very important part of strengthening the safety net for transit agencies.

After all, the weather in New England is famously changeable—and as transit operators, you need to be able to respond and recover as soon as possible when disaster strikes.

Speaking of recovery, our primary focus in Washington right now is on economic recovery.

I know you read a lot of doom and gloom in the newspapers.

But the fact is, FTA has so far been able to hold its own.

President Obama understands that investing in transportation is essential to creating jobs, improving access to jobs, and helping us stay competitive with the rest of the world.

In this fiscal year alone, FTA has managed to sustain core funding levels and to continue some important and innovative new initiatives that improve the quality of life and spur economic activity in our communities—urban, suburban, and rural.

For example, we're making $750 million dollars available this year to help bring our buses and bus facilities into a state of good repair, known as SGR. This is one of our highest priorities at FTA, and New England's transit agencies stand to benefit from a portion of that investment.

Now more than ever, your riders need to be able to count on a safe, reliable ride to work, to school, to medical care.

At the same time, FTA is working to help you bring your vehicles and facilities into a state of good repair as a way to reduce ongoing maintenance costs, improve fuel efficiency, and get a better handle on your asset management needs going forward.

Last year, our SGR funds helped Chittenden County Transportation in Vermont, for example, to make much-needed upgrades to an aging bus fleet.

We're also awarding $150 million to ensure that transit buses are a centerpiece of our livability initiative.

This is all about improving mobility and access to jobs and vital services, encouraging more affordable housing near transit hubs, and better coordinating transportation, housing, and commercial investments.

All priorities for New England communities.

And we're providing a total of nearly $100 million through our Clean Fuels and TIGGER programs to help the transit industry become innovators in clean energy. This in turn means cleaner air and less dependence on costly oil.

Now, we know full well that maintaining this momentum will not be easy in today's political climate.

We know that you're deeply concerned about the impact that shrinking state and local budgets have already had—and will continue to have—on your ability to provide a local funding match.

That's why we think it's vitally important for Congress to pass the President's American Jobs Act as soon as possible.

The President's goal is to put more money in the pockets of working Americans, as we rebuild our roads, bridges, airports, schools, and of course, transit systems.

There are three main components in the President's proposal:

First, a $50 billion immediate investment in transportation-related construction jobs.

Second, a National Infrastructure Bank, with $10 billion in upfront loan funding for a wide range of critical projects in transportation, water, and energy.

And third, the package directs federal departments and agencies to identify high impact, job-creating infrastructure projects so we can fast-track them through the review and permitting process.

We know there are good projects all across this country just waiting to get started, including right here in Maine.

And we know there are millions of unemployed construction workers looking for jobs.

That's why the American Jobs Act assigns more funding to DOT—$50 billion—than any other federal department.

A significant slice of that will help to buy new buses and rolling stock, and much-needed repairs for existing rail and bus systems, in urban, suburban, and rural areas around the country.

There's also $5 billion for jobs on projects selected through a scaled-up TIGER program.

One other bit of welcome news: Up to 10 percent of the transit funds in this package could be used for operating assistance, which our recipients need in these tough times.

Now what's all this go to do with transit needs in Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont?

Plenty.

The Jobs Act would provide, among other things:

- more than $3.5 million for rural transit in Maine,
- $2.3 million for rural transit in New Hampshire, and
- $1.7 million for rural transit in Vermont.

In addition, the President's proposal, if fully funded, would provide nearly three-quarters of a million dollars to transit providers here in Portland, to bring buses and bus facilities into a state of good repair.

Congress needs to pass this legislation right away, and with good reason: It's going to create the jobs that people need right now, while building the infrastructure this country needs need for years to come.

But the fact is, we can't make the American Jobs Act the law of the land without you.

In community after community, transformations are underway because of your tireless efforts – whether making your neighborhoods more livable… or your transit systems
more accessible.

We need you to bring that same commitment to this critical push for the American Jobs Act. We need you not just to join the cause, but to lead it.

If we come together – if we fight to break through the do-nothing status-quo – we can give the American people the transportation choices they demand and deserve.

Now is the time to act.

Thank you.

###

Alaska Community Transportation Transit Conference

Remarks for Therese McMillan, FTA

10/25/2011

On behalf of Secretary LaHood and Administrator Peter Rogoff, I'm delighted to join you today.

This is my second visit to Alaska, and I'm excited to be back.

In this state, perhaps more than any other, access to safe, reliable, affordable public transportation truly means the difference between working and not working. . . between getting an education, or vital medical attention, and missing out. . . and on occasion, between life and death itself.

I want to thank and commend all of you, for everything you do to plan, manage, and deliver transportation services to Alaska's cities, rural communities, and tribal villages, often under challenging conditions.

We at FTA are proud to be your partners as we work together to improve transportation choices state-wide.

Together, we're modernizing and improving the safety of Alaska's railways, and spurring economic development with projects like the Ship Creek Intermodal Transportation Center.

Over 20 of Alaska's tribal groups have also applied for and received FTA funds. My colleague Linda Gehrke will discuss our tribal transit programs later today. I hope you'll attend that session.

I'm also encouraged to see that Governor Parnell's Coordinated Transportation Task Force has been so productive.

This is a worthwhile effort to take a fresh look at how best to coordinate cost-effective and efficient community-based transportation to Alaska residents who depend on transit the most – including seniors, people with disabilities, low-income families, and tribes.

We've appointed our regional administrator, Rick Krochalis, to serve as an ex-officio member on the task force along with our partners from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Veterans Affairs.

I applaud the Task Force's recommendation to the legislature and the Governor, seeking to increase state funds dedicated for transit.

And I want to thank those of you here today who belong to the task force for your outstanding work on behalf of so many transit riders.

I'm sure you'll agree that even in tough times like these, we cannot afford to neglect helping people who need to access jobs, medical care, and other vital services – and who wish to live as independently as possible, for as long as possible.

We fully support efforts to better coordinate transportation for these populations. . . which is why I look forward to visiting People Mover's Transit Training Center tomorrow, where these goals are put into practice every day. This is a project we were happy to help fund.

Now I'd like to share a perspective from Washington on the direction of transportation in this country.

Earlier this month, FTA announced nearly 300 competitive discretionary grants totaling more than $900 million for an array of transit projects around the country to repair and modernize our bus fleets and bus facilities.

These projects go a long way to support more livable communities, while helping to bring more of our aging transit systems into a state of good repair.

I'm pleased to see that Alaska competed successfully for one of these grants, bringing home $2.4 million to replacing an aging, leaking, poorly insulated roof on People Mover's bus maintenance facility here in Anchorage.

It's absolutely vital that we keep this momentum going.

We reviewed well over 800 project applications representing nearly $5 billion in funding requests for this latest round of grants. So we know there's real pent-up demand for more and better transit service.

That's why we're asking Congress to pass the transportation portion of the American Jobs Act, as soon as possible.

It's a bill that will put more people to work and put more money in the pockets of working Americans. It will provide our economy with the jolt that it really needs right now.

And it will allow us to invest in more good transportation projects like the People Move project here.

We all know what's at stake: Putting people back to work. Restoring economic security for the middle class. Rebuilding an economy where hard work is valued and responsibility is rewarded – an economy that's built to last.

It's worth noting that the President's proposed jobs bill includes $9 billion in additional funds for FTA, so we can put Americans to work improving our service, shoring up our reliability, avoiding service reductions, and avoiding layoffs.

That’s a tremendous vote a confidence for us – and for you, as the ultimate stewards of these funds.

Whatever Congress comes up with in the next surface transportation bill, we can take pride in the fact that this President, and this Administration, understand the importance of investing in transportation infrastructure to grow America’s economy – and creating thousands of new jobs in the process.

Now let me share something else we’re working on that matters to all of you -- environmental justice.

FTA is in the middle of a campaign to confirm the importance of – and clarify the implementation of – how you determine the impact that federally funded transportation projects have on minority and low-income communities – a population that includes Alaska’s tribal villages.

Over the last 15 years, FTA’s guidance on environmental justice has boiled down to less than a single page buried in our Title VI Civil Rights circular.

This has caused considerable confusion and frustration on the part of our grantees—and frankly, our staff as well.

So we’ve drafted a brand new Environmental Justice circular.

It proposes new guidance on how FTA’s grant recipients could incorporate principles of environmental justice into all aspects of their transit operations—from planning to project construction to service delivery.

We also drafted a revised, updated Title VI circular.

Both proposed rulemakings were published in the Federal Register on September 29th. You can find them online at FTA’s website.

I strongly urge you to work with your colleagues to review these proposals and post comments to the docket, so that we may take all views into account for a final rulemaking.

This isn’t about creating new regulations or requirements.

It’s about clarifying what’s already required by law, and drawing a sharper distinction between the Title VI requirements and our proposed Environmental Justice guidance.

Title VI and EJ are equally important considerations when planning and designing federally funded transportation projects. Decisions in these areas directly affect the quality of life wherever transit is built or enhanced.

This certainly has a bearing in Alaska, and we want all of you to understand these responsibilities fully—which is why we’re going to great lengths to clarify them.

In closing, I want to urge all of you to help us make the case that this is not the time to cut spending for the infrastructure this country needs to compete and build an economy for the 21st century.

This is no time to sit on the sidelines.

If the President of the United States can go before your Congressman and your Senators and make the case for investment in public transit, surely you can do the same thing.

Thank you so much.

###

Los Angeles Metro Discretionary Grant Announcement

Remarks for Therese McMillan, FTA

10/28/2011

Thank you, Mayor Villaraigosa and Art Leahy [LA Metro], for inviting me to join you today.

It's great to be back in my home state of California.

On behalf of President Obama and Secretary LaHood, I want to congratulate the people of Los Angeles.

We're here today to celebrate $34 million in federal grants to improve transit connections and reduce congestion for millions of area residents and commuters.

These grants will help Metro to buy new energy-efficient buses, and build a new Patsaouras Plaza Bus Station right next to Union Station downtown, so travelers can more easily connect with buses and trains from downtown LA to almost anywhere.

But the fact is we should be doing a lot more than this for a county as big and as busy as LA.

And we could do a lot more if Congress would pass the transportation provisions in the American Jobs Act.

Right here in LA and Orange County, the American Jobs Act, by itself, would deliver more than $400 million to modernize local bus and transit facilities and bring them into a state of good repair. . .

And the Jobs Act would deliver over $1 billion to California for transit improvements statewide.

Modernizing stations to accommodate more passengers…

And improving connections between bus and rail service—so that even more people leave their cars at home and take transit instead.

We know the needs are out there.

And we know the need for good jobs are out there.

The project we're announcing today will help to create or sustain upwards of 1,000 jobs.

Add to that another 4,000 jobs connected with Metro's and the state DOT's ongoing work to reduce traffic congestion on LA's famously crowded freeways and build a major new bus operations facility next to Union Station.

Now imagine what LA could accomplish if Congress got off the dime and passed the American Jobs Act.

There are too many people hurting in this country – and in Los Angeles County -- for us to simply do nothing.

That’s why Congress needs to get this done – now.

The American Recovery & Reinvestment Act showed us the way – showed us that taxpayer dollars invested in transportation bring jobs and a better standard of living back to those very same taxpayers.

So I urge all of you to tell your representatives:

Pass the Jobs Act.

It will put more people to work and put more money in the pockets of working Americans.

It will provide our economy with the jolt that it really needs right now.

And it will allow us to invest in more good transportation projects like the ones we’re highlighting today.

Thank you.

###

Funding Transportation in New York

12/2/2011

REMARKS FOR
THERESE MCMILLAN, FTA
FUNDING TRANSPORTATION IN NEW YORK

As Prepared for Delivery

I'm delighted to join you today to highlight the Obama Administration's commitment to help New York, and the nation, build the transportation infrastructure we need and deserve in order to compete with the rest of the world -- and get our economy back on track.

We are well aware that we face a crisis in this country. Our citizens are struggling. Our transportation systems are overburdened and fast becoming obsolete. And, to be honest, as Secretary LaHood himself has observed, our politics are so broken that we can't connect the people who need work with the work that needs to be done.

And yet, we at FTA, and everyone in this Administration, will not be deterred.

And we will not give up.

We refuse to let political gridlock, or a climate of shrinking expectations, keep us from helping cities like New York design a future where people have *more* transportation choices – not less. . . and where efforts to reduce congestion, reduce oil consumption, and improve air quality are a reality – not simply a hope.
Now more than ever, our government needs to be a catalyst promoting growth, jobs, and 21st century infrastructure.

That's why, this fiscal year alone, the FTA has obligated over $1.5 billion in grants to help modernize and transform public transportation throughout New York State.

That's why there's an additional $1.2 billion of federal funds in the pipeline this year for statewide transportation needs that also reflect local priorities, and nearly $168 million awarded for discretionary projects in Buffalo, Rochester, East New York, and elsewhere.

Over the last two fiscal years, we've delivered over $230 million to help seven of New York's key transit agencies begin to tackle one of the nation's largest maintenance and repair backlogs.

That's a down-payment on new clean-fuel buses, energy-efficient facilities, and many other critical needs.

We've also helping New York give the Fordham Transit Plaza a modern make-over and embark on the Fulton Street Transit Center rehab.

And of course, we continue to support three of the largest, most complex capital transit projects in the country—New York's East Side Access, the Second Avenue Subway, and the World Trade Center transportation hub.

All these investments, and more, generate thousands of good-paying jobs for New Yorkers, at a time when these jobs are needed most.

But as well all know, it's simply not enough.

As you've already heard today, we need a new paradigm to develop, build, and maintain not only New York's transportation systems, but all the systems of regional and national significance across the country.

We can't meet our massive infrastructure needs with just one color of money.

We need the private sector at the table with us, along with our state and local partners.

And we need bold, creative financing mechanisms that increase our appetite for responsible risk and encourage us to go after the very large, capital-intensive, game-changing projects that have traditionally defined us as a nation.

You're here today to talk about how this can be accomplished.

Let me add a few ideas to the discussion.

Our approach is straightforward:

We're interested in working with all our partners, public and private, to expand the toolkit available to them – while empowering local decision makers as much as possible.

We think that the Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act---TIFIA-- belongs in the toolkit.

TIFIA, as you may know, provides federal credit assistance in the form of direct loans, loan guarantees, and other mechanisms to finance big infrastructure projects.

We estimate that every $100 million of TIFIA credit leverages roughly $1 billion in additional lending capacity.

It's worked for highways. We're confident it can work for transit, too – as Denver, San Francisco, and others are discovering. And it worked for the Staten Island Ferry renovation some years back.

We're hopeful that under the right circumstances, New York can tap this resource again.

Please be aware that the door is still wide open for TIFIA applications.

DOT has $110 million in loan funds available for the 2012 funding cycle for good highway, passenger rail, transit, intermodal, and intelligent transportation system projects. As I noted, these funds will leverage ten times more in additional loan capacity.

Project sponsors have until December 30th to submit a letter of interest, as outlined in the Federal Register.

This is a highly competitive program – and DOT routinely receives far more funding requests than it can meet.

In 2011 alone, DOT received requests for $14 billion in credit assistance – more than ten times the amount actually available.

President Obama recognizes the need for leadership in this area.

That's why he has proposed to fund a National Infrastructure Bank -- $30 billion over six years – to support a combination of grants and TIFIA-type loans and lines of credit.

If we're serious about building transportation projects of regional and national significance – projects that are simply too big and too expensive for a single entity to bear -- this is the way to go.

And if we're serious about continuing to leverage taxpayer dollars wisely, this approach will bring more local dollars back into local communities, for projects that people care about the most.

We also continue to support the Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing loan program, which allows FTA and the FRA to jointly administer up to $35 billion in direct loans and loan guarantees to improve intermodal and freight rail facilities.

Now, there's one other tool I want to mention.

This tool isn't about money. It's about people.

Without access to education, training, apprenticeships, mentors, and start-up business capital – well, all the capital and operating investments we are making in our transport systems won't take us where we need to go.

We need skilled people to design systems, build them, operate and maintain them. Workforce development and business opportunity programs are essential to making our dollar investments work "on the ground."

I'm glad to see that a discussion of minority and women-owned businesses is on your agenda today.

This is an issue we care deeply about at DOT.

In fact, earlier this year, we implemented a new rule to help DBEs compete more effective on federally funded transportation contracts in four key areas:

One – by making it easier for certified DBE firms to compete in different states without needing to get recertified.

Two – by adjusting the personal net worth cap upwards, from $750,000 to $1.3 million, so more DBE entrepreneurs qualify to compete.

Three – by requiring state and local transportation agencies to include DBEs in their spending plans.

And four – by encouraging new tools to foster small business participation, such as unbundling large contracts and establishing race-neutral small-business set-asides.

Our goal is to open up the federal contracting process to everyone—and create a more level playing field for small businesses that put people to work.

We're also deeply committed to developing the workforce of tomorrow.

Over the summer, we launched an innovative workforce development initiative to target pilot programs around the country that train, hire, develop, and retain transit workers.

We need a knowledgeable workforce in this country – and it isn't going to happen if we don't make it happen.

FTA has invested $3 million in this initiative.

These funds will support programs in New Orleans and Denver that train new workers for jobs in the transit industry.

It supports vocational programs in Massachusetts and New Jersey that prepare high school and college students for careers in transit.

It includes leadership training at transit agencies in New York, California, Pennsylvania, and Ohio.

Yes, we need TIFIA. We need an I-Bank. We need public-private partnerships.

But above all, we need a government and an economy that invests in people.

We've made it our mission at FTA, and across DOT, to do both.

In closing, let's remember that there's no such thing as a Democratic or Republican bridge or rail line.

Our infrastructure belongs to all of us.

As President Obama said recently,

“We’re fighting back. We are moving forward. And we are going to get this right so that every single American has an opportunity in this country.”

Thank you.

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